

NIXON'S
CHESHIRE PROPHECY,
AT LARGE;
PUBLISHED FROM LADY COWPER'S
CORRECT COPY,
IN THE REIGN OF QUEEN ANNE;
WITH
HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL
REMARKS;
AND
SEVERAL INSTANCES
WHEREIN IT HAS BEEN FULFILLED.
ALSO
HIS LIFE.

BY JOHN OLDMIXON, Esq.

Chester,

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INTRODUCTION.

THIS remarkable Prophecy has been carefully revised, corrected, and improved; also some account given of our author, Robert Nixon, who was but a kind of idiot, and used to be employed in following the plough. He had lived in some farmers' families, and was their drudge and their jest.

At last, Thomas Cholmondeley, of Vale-Royal, Esq. took him into his house, and he lived there when he composed this Prophecy, which he delivered with as much gravity and solemnity as if he had been an oracle; and it was observed, that tho' the fool was a driveler, and could not speak common sense when he was uninspired, yet in delivering his Prophecies he spoke plainly and sensibly; how truly will be seen in the following pages.

As to the credit of this Prophecy, I dare say it is as well attested as any of Nostradamus's or Merlin's, and come to pass as well as the best of 'Squire Bickerstaff's'. It is plain enough that great men have in all ages had recourse to prophecy as well as the vulgar. I would not have all grave persons despise the inspirations of Nixon. The late French King gave audience to an inspired farrier, and rewarded him with an hundred pistoles for his prophetic intelligence; though by what I can learn he did not come near our Nixon for gifts.

The simplicity, the circumstances, and history, of the Cheshire Prophecy, are so remarkable, that I hope the public will be as much delighted as I was myself.

By the way, this is not a prophecy of to-day; it is as old as the Powder-plot, and the story will make it appear, that there is as little imposture in it as the Jacobites pretend there is in the person it seems to have an eye to: but whether they are both impostures alike or not, I leave to the reader to determine.

J. OLDMIXON.

THE PROPHECY.

IN the reign of King James the First, there lived a man, generally reputed a fool, whose name was Nixon. One day, when he returned home from ploughing in the field, he laid the things down which he had in his hands, and continuing for some time in a seemingly deep and thoughtful meditation, at length he pronounced in a loud voice, Now I will prophesy. And spoke as follows :

When a Raven shall build in a Stone Lion's mouth on the top of a Church in Cheshire, then a King of England shall be driven out of his kingdom, and never return more.

When an Eagle shall sit on the top of the house, then an heir shall be born to the Cholmondeley's family ; and this heir shall live to see England invaded by foreigners, who shall proceed so far as a town in Cheshire ; but a Miller, named Peter, shall be born with two heels on one foot, and at that time living in a mill of Mr. Cholmondeley's, he shall be instrumental in delivering the nation.

The person who then governs the nation will be in great trouble, and skulk about : The invading King shall be killed, laid across a horse's back like a calf, and led in triumph. The miller, having been instrumental in it, shall bring forth the person that then governs the kingdom, and be knighted for what he has done ; and after that England see happy days. A young new set of men shall come, who shall prosper, and make a flourishing Church for two hundred years.

As a token of the truth of all this, a wall of Mr. Cholmondeley's shall fall : If it falls downwards, the Church shall be oppressed, and rise no more : but if upwards, next the rising hill on the side of it, then it shall flourish again. Under this wall shall be found the bones of a British King.

A pond shall run with blood three days, and the Cross-stone Pillar in the Forest sink so low into the ground, that a crow from the top of it shall drink of the best blood in England.

A boy shall be born with three thumbs, and shall hold three Kings' horses, while England shall be three times won and lost in one day.

THE original may be seen in several families in Cheshire, and in particular in the hands of Mr. Eger-ton, of Oulton, with many other remarkables; as, that Pecfertou Windmill should be removed to Ludditon Hill, that horses saddled should run about till their girths rotted away. But this is sufficient to prove Nixon as great a prophet as Partridge, and we shall give other proofs of it before we have done.

I know your Prophets are generally for Raw-head and Bloody-bones, and therefore do not mind it much; or I might add, that Oulton Mill shall be driven with blood instead of water. But these Soothsayers are great Butchers, and every Hall is with them a Slaught-er-house.

Now as for authorities to prove this Prophecy to be genuine, and how it has been hitherto accomplished, I might refer myself to the whole county of Chester, where it is in every one's mouth, and has been for these forty years. As much as I have of the manu-script was sent me by a person of sense and veracity, and as little disposed to believe visions as any body. For my own part I build nothing on this or any other Prophecy; only there is something so very odd in the story, and so pat in the wording of it, that I cannot help giving it as I found it. The family of the Chol-mondleys is very antient in this county, and takes its name from a place so called, near Nantwich. There are also Cholmton and Cholmondeston; but the seat of that branch of the family, which kept our Prophet Nixon, is at Vale-Royal, on the river Weaver in Dela-mere

mere forest. It was formerly an Abbey founded by Edward I. and came to the Cholmondeleys from the famous family of the Holcrofts. When Nixon prophesied, this family was near being extinct, the heir having married Sir Walter St. John's daughter, a lady not esteemed very young, who, notwithstanding, being with child, fell in labour, and continued so for some days. (During which time an Eagle sat upon the house-top, and flew away when she was delivered, which proved to be a son.)

A Raven is also known to have built in a Stone Lion's mouth, in the steeple of the Church of Over, in the forest of Delamere. Not long before the abdication of King James, the wall spoken of fell down and fell upwards, and in removing the rubbish, were found the bones of a man of more than ordinary size. A pond at the same time ran with water that had a reddish tincture, and was never known to have done so before or since.

Headless Cross, in the Forest, which in the memory of man was several feet high, is now sunk within half a foot of the ground.

In the parish of Budworth, a boy was born with three thumbs; he had also two heels on one foot.—Lady Egerton, wishing well to another restoration, often instigated her husband to turn Peter, the miller of Neginshire mills, out of the mill; but he looked upon it as a whimsey, and so permitted Peter still to continue there, in hopes of becoming as good a knight as Sir Philip his landlord was.

Of this Peter I have been told that the Lady Narcliff, of Chelsea, and the Lady St. John, of Battersea, have often been heard to talk; and that they both asserted the truth of our Prophecy, and its accomplishment, with particulars that are more extraordinary than any I have yet mentioned. The noise of Nixon's predictions reaching the ears of King James the First,

he would needs see this fool, who cried and made ado that he might not go to Court ; and the reason that he gave was, That he should be starved.

(A very whimsical fancy of his: Courts are not places where people use to starve in, when they once come there, whatever they did before.) The King being informed of Nixon's refusing to come, said he would take particular care that he should not be starved, and ordered him to be brought up. Nixon cried out, He was sent for again, and soon after the messenger arrived, who brought him up from Cheshire.

How or whether he prophesied to his Majesty, no body can tell ; but he is not the first fool that has made a good Court Prophet.

That Nixon might be well provided for, 'twas ordered that he should be kept in the kitchen, where he grew so troublesome in licking and picking the meat, that the cooks locked him up in a hole, and the King going on a sudden from Hampton Court to London, they forgot the fool in the hurry, and he was really starved to death.

There are a great many passages of this Fool Prophet's life and sayings transmitted by tradition from father to son in this county palatine ; as, that when he lived with a farmer, before he was taken into Mr. Cholmondeley's family, he gored an ox so cruelly, that one of the ploughmen threatened to beat him for abusing his master's beast. Nixon said, My master's beast will not be his three days. A life in an estate dropping in that time, the Lord of the manor took the same ox for an herriot. This account, as whimsical and romantic as it is, was told to the Lady Cowper, in the year 1670, by Dr. Patrick, late Bishop of Ely, then Chaplain to Sir Walter St. John ; and that Lady had the following farther particulars, relating to this Prophecy, and the fulfilling of many parts of it, from Mrs. Chute, sister of Mrs. Cholmondeley, of Vale-Royal.

Royal ; who affirmed, That a multitude of people gathering together to see the Eagle before-mentioned, the bird was frightened from her young ; that she herself was one of them, and the cry among the people was, Nixon's Prophecy is fulfilled, and we shall have a foreign King. She declared, that she read over the Prophecy many times, when her sister was with-child of the heir who now enjoys the estate. She particularly remembered that King James II. was plainly pointed at, and that it was foretold he should endeavour to subvert the laws and religion of this kingdom, for which reason they would rise and turn him out ; that the Eagle of which Nixon prophesied perched in one of the windows all the time her sister was in labour. She said it was the biggest bird she ever saw ; that it was in a deep snow, and that it perched on the edge of a great bow-window, which had a large border on the outside, and that she and many others opened the window to try to scare it away, but it would not stir till Mrs. Cholmondeley was delivered ; after which it took flight to a great tree over against the room her sister lay in, where having staid about three days, it flew away in the night. She affirmed further to the Lady Cowper, that the falling of the garden-wall was a thing not to be questioned, it being in so many people's memory : That it was foretold that the heir of Vale-Royal should live to see England invaded by foreigners, and that he should fight bravely for his King and his country : That the Miller mentioned is alive, and expects to be knighted, and is in the very mill that is foretold : That he should kill two invaders who would come in, the one from the West, and the other from the North : That he from the North should bring with him of all nations ; Swedes, Danes, Germans, and Dutch ; and that in the folds of his garments he should bring fire and famine, plague and murder : That many great battles

should be fought in England, one upon London Bridge; which would be so bloody, that people would ride in London streets up to their horses bellies in blood; that several other battles should be fought up and down most parts in Cheshire; and that the last that ever would be fought in England should be on Delamere forest: That the heir of Oulton, whose name is E———n, and has married Earl Cholmondeley's sister, shall be hanged up at his own gate.

Lastly, He foretels great glory and prosperity to those who stand up in defence of their laws and liberties, and ruin and misery to those that should betray them. He says, the year before this would happen, bread-corn would be very dear, and that the year following more troubles should begin, which would last three years; that the first would be moderate, the second bloody, and the third intolerable; that unless they were shortened, no mortal could bear them; and that there were no mischiefs but what poor England would feel at that time. But that *George*, the son of *George*, should put an end to all. That afterwards the Church should flourish, and England be the most glorious nation upon earth. The same Lady Cowper was not content to take these particulars from Mrs. Chute, but she inquired of Sir Thomas Aston, of the truth of this Prophecy, and he attested it was in great reputation in Cheshire, and that the facts were known by every one to have happened as Nixon said they would, adding, that the morning before the garden-wall fell, his neighbour Mr. Cholmondeley going to ride out a hunting, said, Nixon seldom fails, but now I think he will; for he foretold that this day my garden-wall would fall, and I think it looks as if it would stand these forty years; that he had not been gone a quarter of an hour before the wall split, and fell upwards against the rising of the hill, which, as Nixon would have it, was the presage of a flourishing church.

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As to the removal of Pecserton mill, it was done by Sir John Crewe, the mill having lost its trade there, for which he ordered it to be set upon Ludditon hill; and being asked if he did it to fulfil the Prophecy, he declared he never thought of it. I myself have inquired of a person who knows Mr. Cholmondeley's pond as well as Rosamond's in St. James's Park, and he assured me the falling of the wall, and the pond running blood, as they call it, are facts which, in Cheshire, any one would be reckoned mad for making the least question of. As there are several particulars in this Prophecy which remain unfulfilled, so when they come to pass some other circumstances may be added, which are not convenient to be told until accomplished.

If I had a mind to look into the antiquities of this county, I might find that Prodigies and Prophecies are no unusual things there. Cambden tells us, that at Brereton, not many miles from Vale-Royal, which gave name to a famous, antient, numerous, and knightly family, there is a thing as strange as the perching Eagle, or the falling of the wall, which he says was attested to him by many persons, and was commonly believed; that before any heir of this family dies, there are seen in a lake adjoining, the bodies of trees swimming upon the water for several days together. He likewise adds, that near the Abbey of St. Maurice, in Burgundy, there is a fish-pond, in which a number of fishes are put, equal to the number of Monks of that place; and if any one of them happens to be sick, there is a fish seen floating on the water; and in case the fit of sickness proves fatal to the Monk, the fish foretells it by its own death some days before. This the learned Cambden relates in his description of Cheshire, and the opinion of the trees swimming in the lake near Brereton prevails all about the county to this day, only with this difference, that some say 'tis one log that swims, and some say many.

J. OLDMIXON.

THE
LIFE OF NIXON,
THE CHESHIRE PROPHECY.

SIR,

I Have read over your Cheshire Prophecy, and must needs say, that what you have added is to be found in the original, written in doggrel verse: I have read it over and over; and though it is longer than your Prophecy, yet I think the substance of it is there; and I shall now give you some material passages which will serve to make your Prophecy compleat. To these I shall add a short account of his life, as I have been able to inform myself of it by old people. I could meet but with one man who remembered the Prophet, and that was old Woodman, of Copnal.

He says, that Nixon was a short squab fellow; had a great head, and goggle eyes; that he used to drivel as he spoke, which was very rarely, and was extremely furly. He particularly had a spite against children, and would run after them to beat them when they came in his way, especially if they made sport with him, as he said they used to do, and himself among the rest, when he was a lad. He was at first plough boy to farmer Crowton, of Swanlow, and so stubborn that they could make him do nothing without beating. They could seldom get any thing out of him but Yes and No; and if he spoke much more, it was untelligible; he would hardly say no and yes, unless he was pinched by hunger. He had a very good stomach; and the report was, that he would eat up a shoulder of mutton at a meal, if they would let him, and a good luncheon of bread and cheese after it. The people had, it seems, a strange reverence even for his stupidity;

dity ; and they took his silence to be like that of an oracle, as portentous as if he prophesied.

The first time he was found out to be a prophet, was upon this occasion ; Farmer Crowton being one day at plough in a field, near the River Weaver, in Swanlow parish, and his boy Nixon following him, the boy stopt on a sudden, dropt his bottle and budget which he carried to the field with him, and stood motionless with his eyes fixed towards Heaven. Neither words nor blows could get him out of this trance for the space of an hour. When he recovered, he took up the things he had dropped, and followed the plough. His master, and the men that were at work in the same field, stood by him all the while, taking him to be in a fit ; but wondered still that he stood upright, and did not fall down. He himself seemed to be insensible of any alteration that had happened to him. But, for a quarter of an hour after, he talked very rationally of several things that had been done some time before, and dropt expressions of others that were to be done ; which presently made his master, and those that were with him, conclude, that Nixon's dulness had something sacred in it, and that his words were oracles, especially when some little things he foretold fell out according to his prediction. It was with this farmer that he lived when he prophesied of his master's ox, as is mentioned in his Prophecy.

I must correct some errors that you have been led into by the imperfect copies of his Prophecy ; as that about the falling of the wall, which some zealous people have applied to the Church ; whereas, in truth, it has a literal reference to the State only. Woodman said, the common tradition has been, that when the wall belonging to Vale-Royal house fell down, it was to denote some remarkable change in the government : That if it was a serene day, and the wall fell inward it signified an advantageous and happy change ; but if
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it were a stormy day, and fell outward, and any stones fell into the brook, it signified the direct contrary; to this he added, that the Cholmondeley family, whose seat it was, kept several workmen in yearly pay to support the wall, and every month to inspect it all round; that it was buttressed both within and without; and the week before it fell, the workmen gave in their report, that it was so strong it might reasonably last an hundred years, without any repairs.

This, I assure you, is only what the old man told me, but what I have heard from several others, and can get well attested, if it is thought proper: As also the particulars of the falling of the wall, which are these:

“ Upon the fourth of August, 1688, about 11 o’clock in the forenoon, being a calm and clear day, without the least breath of wind, that wall fell flat inwards all at once, and not so much as one single stone fell outwards.”

This happening so little a while before the Revolution, it was taken notice of as an accident which was very much to our advantage: And as there was a greater rising for the Prince of Orange in Cheshire, than in any other county in England, why may we not imagine that Nixon’s Prophecy contributed very much to it? The objection to this may be, that the owner of the house of Thomas Cholmondeley, Esq. was a Jacobite; and it is not likely that any thing about him could bode well to the Revolution. But his being a Jacobite gives the greater authority to the prediction, and the fulfilling of it. For it is not likely that one, who was an enemy to the Prince of Orange, should let a miracle be wrought in his house in favour of the happy change he soon after accomplished. I should not have made this digression, had not some silly people almost as stupid as Nixon, but by no means so well gifted in Prophecy, given out that the falling of the
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the wall denoted the rising of the Pretender ; and this too just as he was running away from Scotland.

I cannot help observing to you on this occasion, that some of us in this county were strangely spirited by your Prophecy. When the rebels advanced to Preston, we were told that they intended to march through our county into Flintshire and Denbighshire ; if they had, their route must have been through Delamere forest, where Nixon lived and prophesied ; and the miller Peter, with his countrymen, were resolved to have given them such a reception, as would have given very great credit to your Prophecy, which is abused when any interpretation is applied to it that has an eye to Popery and Slavery : For as great a fool as Nixon was, he was not so stupid as our modern zealots, nor ever dropt a word against the Protestant religion.

To return to old Woodman : He informed me further, that after it was known what a Prophet Farmer Crowton had in his family, Mr. Cholmondeley sent for the fellow, and kept him at his house, giving him in charge to his steward, whom he ordered to try whether he could make any thing of him, and teach him to read. But Nixon's stupidity increased upon him, the more the steward endeavoured to improve him ; and the most he could do with him, was to make him hold his goad right, and drive oxen at plough. As he was once in the field with the rest of Mr. Cholmondeley's servants, he let fall his goad on a sudden, as he had dropt his budget and bottle formerly. He stood motionless after the same manner, with his eyes fixed towards Heaven. The servants talked to him, and beat him to get to his work, but all to no purpose. He remained in a sort of trance for the space of an hour ; and then recovering, he took up his goad, and went on with his business as though nothing had befallen him. One of Mr. Cholmondeley's men asked him,

him, what ailed him? and why he stood so long? to whom Nixon replied, that he had seen those things which man never saw before. He then discoursed to the servants, that crowded about him for near two hours, and spoke as reasonably as the best of them could have done without any manner of hesitation in his discourse.

He foretold the Civil Wars, the Death of King Charles I. the Restoration of King Charles II. the Abdication of King James II. the Revolution and glorious War with France, and the flourishing state of this kingdom afterwards: adding, that these things will as certainly happen, as that I shall be sent for by the King, and be starved to death. When he had finished his speech, he returned to his natural dulness and silence; and unless he had been in one of his trances, he was always dull and mute; but while he was uttering his prophecies, he spoke clearly, and with an air of assurance, that they would be accomplished. The servants, as soon as they came home, told their master of this prodigy; and Mr. Cholmondeley ordered them to write down as much of it as they could remember, which they did, and it is preserved in that family to this day; together with some less material hints, as hard weather, and scarcity of provisions, &c which would certainly happen.—That family has always locked it up as a treasure, and whatever pains I have taken to procure a copy of it, I could never succeed, and despair now of getting it. Mr. Egerton, of Oulton, who is nearly related to the Cholmondeley family, has a copy of it also, but he will not part with it. Both of those families do lay great stress on Nixon's predictions; and, I must tell you, they are two of the most ancient and honourable families in our county.

You have mentioned Nixon's being sent for to Court by King James the first. Woodman says it was thus: when

when he came to Court, that the King gave him in charge to one of his officers, commanding him to keep him in close confinement, and to make strict observations on his behaviour, that he might be assured there was nothing of imposture in him. This gentleman kept Nixon locked up, and going in a hurry with the King to Theobalds, he forgot to take care of him, and leave him provisions till his return; by which means he was starved to death. It must be observed that Nixon could not speak, except it was immediately after he came out of his trance, and never could be brought to pronounce a sensible word more than aye or no, as hath been said, unless when he was pronouncing his oracles.

There happened something with respect to Nixon and his going to court, like what I met with in the pamphlet you sent me, called *The Drummer of Tedworth*. For as that Drummer left beating, when King Charles's Courtiers came to be upon the watch with him, and would not satisfy their curiosity; so our clown of a prophet, after he came to Court, was entirely dumb, and pronounced no more prophecies. It is said he was not long there before he was starved to death.

Nixon was very grateful to his master Cholmondeley; he prophesied that the heir to be born to the family, threescore and ten years after, should be endowed with every eminent qualification, and arrive at greater honours than any of his ancestors had done: That he should distinguish himself by his loyalty and services to the King then reigning; and that, after the happy settlement which would succeed the struggle, the peace would be lasting, with a continued series of honours and glory to the nation. This child, said Nixon, shall be known by the appearance of an Eagle at the time of his birth, with the circumstances mentioned in your prophecy. A long time before the Eagle appeared, the country people used to look out for it; and as often

as the Lady of Vale-Royal lay in, they would cry, Where is the Eagle? When will Nixon's heir be born? The appearance of the Eagle was about five and twenty years ago: The lady who lay in was aunt to Henry St. John, late Lord Bolingbrooke; when she was in labour she heard great shoutings and acclamations of joy; and inquiring the reason, was told the Eagle so long talked of is come. Upon which her sister and Mr. J. S. who are both living, went to the window, saw the Eagle sitting on the bough, and looked at it above a quarter of an hour. It was seen also by several thousands of people, and is such a confirmation of Nixon's prophecy, that the truth of it is no where doubted of either by gentle or simple. There is some variation in the original prophecy from what is mentioned in your prophecy about the Competitors for the kingdom; the Germans, Dutch, and Danes, are to conquer those that bring fire and famine, plague and murder, in the folds of their garments; and we can understand none but the French by such bloody invaders; none but French Papists would bring such destructions among Protestants. As for the miller Peter, he was born about the time of the Revolution; and Nixon prophesied that he should have two heels on one foot, and be knighted; the two heels he hath already, but the spurs are not come to his lot. Yet, however, the country people in this neighbourhood have made a Knight of him these many years, and honest Peter, the miller, is Sir Peter in every one's mouth.

I must here correct an error of Mr. Addison, in his Freeholder, who has not read your prophecy with that attention and regard which a thing of such importance deserves; for he gives the miller two thumbs, whereas Nixon gives him two heels. A mistake in the text of a prophecy is of a very dangerous consequence; and I doubt not, but upon this notice, in future editions this error will be corrected, and justice done to honest Peter the miller.

I am, Sir, your's,

W. E.

